

The City Council of the City of West Columbia, Texas, convenes this the 26th day of July, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in a special meeting held by Zoom telephone and video conference in order to advance the public health goal of limiting face-to-face meetings to slow the spread of the Coronavirus/COVID-19.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Kincannon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Kincannon, Aldermen Thomas, Burke and Biedefeld, City Manager Sutherland and City Secretary Kuban. Absent were Aldermen Tindol and Maynor.
2. **PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2021/22:** Kincannon closed the open meeting and entered into a public hearing at 7:01 p.m. There were no public comments or questions so she closed the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. and reconvened in an open meeting.
3. **BUDGET WORKSHOP:** Sutherland provided a power point presentation of the 2021/22 proposed budget to date. The Utility Fund is balanced, but there is still a deficit of \$180,000 in the General Fund. She reported that upcoming bond payments for the ground storage tank project are proposed to be paid with a combination of tax revenues of \$130,000, utility revenues generated by a \$2 increase to both water and sewer base rates, \$32,000 from Capital Improvement funds and \$35,000 from both General and Utility Fund Balance.

At this point, her calculation of the proposed tax rate could lower the current .737110 to .71 which would be close to the estimated No New Revenue Rate. The new Debt Service I&S tax rate will be .06 separate from the Maintenance & Operation rate.

Also discussed was a proposed \$1 increase to the additional trash cart rate, an increase to WWTP Overhead to \$87,780 in addition to the annual CPI increase to water/sewer rates.

There is currently 5.5 months reserve funds according to the most recent audit, but Sutherland stated that dipping into these too much would deplete fund balance faster than it could be recouped.

Police Department salaries were discussed as being the number one reason for the steady loss of employees to other agencies that pay more. Chief Odin reported that due to grants, the current equipment within the department was in the top percent in the county and that training available to officers excels. He felt employees would stay if salaries could be brought up to mid-range. Burke recommended finding a way to maintain good employees. Two (2) new patrol vehicles are also needed to be purchased in the new fiscal year. Council was supportive of Burke's suggestion to propose rates for the Police Department to sustain employees and purchase the new vehicles by any budget overages being covered with American Rescue Plan Act funds. It was discussed that the city will be receiving ARPA funds of \$840,000.

Public Works was reported to be having the same issue of losing employees to other cities that pay more once their training has been acquired with the City. ARPA funds

were discussed to be used in part for offsetting street repair expenses in addition to other WWTP and drainage expenses. It was reported that Commissioner Linder has offered assistance with GLO projects and drainage study and acquiring easements for the Ellis Lane road improvement project were also discussed.

Sutherland reported that if the TxDOT Hwy 36 widening projects were determined to be federally funded the City may not be required to fund the utility relocations. She stated that Congressman Weber's office has been contacted and a determination is pending. She also wanted Council to keep in mind the cost of services required regarding the 40-acre PID & TIRZ development.

Burke requested information regarding the City's workers compensation experience modifier calculation through Texas Municipal League and suggested that steps be taken to lower the current rate.

The workshop was concluded with Kincannon suggesting the Wells Fargo Bank building located at the intersection of Hwy 35 and Business Hwy 35 being the perfect location for City Hall and Council agreeing with the recommended ARPA expenditures discussed.

4. ADJOURN: Kincannon adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.


Laurie B. Kincannon, Mayor

ATTEST:


Kelli R. Kuban, City Secretary